

May 1, 1975

PRESIDENT: Senator Koch.

SENATOR KOCH: This is my bill and I would like to explain it if it's in proper . . .

SENATOR CARSTEN: I'll yield to Senator Koch.

SENATOR KOCH: Thank you. You have a handout before you which I think very explicitly states to you, in very candid manner, the proposal that's before you right now. The purpose of this proposal is to purchase 1583 acres of land along the Missouri River, next to Fontenell Forest. I don't know if any of you know where Fontenell Forest is, but it's in that area. It's a virgin area. This land is basically the same. The unique features of this land, there is 330 acres under cultivation. There is 1,250 acres in its original and natural state, including 1,000 acres of virgin timber. The operating farm and the natural area combined provide a magnificent opportunity for environmental education and for education in its totality. We are proposing that the State Board of Educational Lands and Funds be authorized to purchase this land and place it for educational purposes in perpetuity. This to be the benefit of the boys and girls and the citizens of the State of Nebraska. The managing agency would be a non-profit corporation, which is presently under existence, made up of educational institutions from K through the University system, included also certain private educational institutions. The metropolitan area program agency and members thereof would operate, manage and develop the educational programs and would be responsible for providing financial directions for the development of these programs. What we're asking here today, fellow Senators, is the amount of money to purchase this piece of land and in doing so, I think this is particularly right at this time. We're looking at 1976 as a bicentennial year. I can't think of a better way for the Legislature to acknowledge in the State of Nebraska than providing this piece of very fine land along the Missouri River for that purpose. As you well know in education today we're looking at outdoor laboratory activities. The Missouri River, for an example, lends itself to what I think would be a great opportunity in the area of ecology, environment, the study of water, marine biology, you name it. It has unlimited opportunities. Those schools, 31 of them presently form this agency, are ready to take this and accomplish those purposes. This facility would be open to the State of Nebraska. It would be open to students. There would be programs that would be placed and documented as good circular programs. These programs would be disseminated through the State Department of Nebraska for the use of other schools as well. So this is not just a selfish program for a specific area. When we're talking about this area, you're talking about Lincoln and this part of the state, we're talking approximately 200,000 students who would be available to use this facility directly, not counting the remaining part who would indirectly benefit from it. This is our proposal to you. I think it has great merit. One other thing, I would remind you that in the Omaha metropolitan area there is a program that all of you have heard much about, you've also observed I think its development. It's call the Riverfront Development. This, in itself, ties